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THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING AND PLACING OF JUVENILES IN ENGLAND

The question of the industrial training and placing of children has during recent years been receiving considerable attention in England. Since 1870, the state has insisted that every child shall receive a free education in elementary subjects until he reaches the thirteenth or fourteenth birthday, and it has, by the making of grants, encouraged the development of continuation classes at which he can, if he wish, continue that education. It has also developed technical and commercial classes where he can improve himself in the trade or occupation he has entered; but we have realized that this is not sufficient, and that the state owes some definite responsibility still to the child whom it has educated, but whose character, intelligence, and powers of following any specific calling are not yet fully developed. This paper is an attempt to show the methods we are adopting to meet our responsibilities. It deals particularly with London, as my experience has been gained there, but all our towns are faced to some extent with the same questions and are by degrees applying the same methods to meet them.

In London, however, the problem is probably the most acute. By her position as chief port and capital, London is a city whose principal industries are transport, building, food, drink, and tobacco preparation, and commercial work, all of which excepting building demand a large amount of unskilled boy labor. It is fatally easy for a boy of fourteen leaving school to pick up a job which is light in nature and which pays him well, and it is fatally easy for him to throw it up on the least excuse and find another until he is seventeen or eighteen years of age. The work he has had, as errand- or van-boy, messenger, or office-boy, has demanded little exercise of intelligence and little power of application, so that at seventeen he has lost whatever of these qualities he gained at school and has little to offer to an employer in return for the higher wages he is now demanding. A period of unemployment

often follows, and he is lucky if at the end he can obtain some position in unskilled work which brings in a steady though low wage.

This has been brought out only too clearly by information collected by two of the Distress Committees for the Unemployed in London.¹ At Lambeth a special inquiry was made concerning 246 men applying for relief who were under twenty-five years of age. Of these 36 per cent had entered some skilled trade, 7 per cent had been agricultural laborers, 36 per cent unskilled workers, and 21 per cent carmen. At Stepney, in an inquiry concerning 333 applicants under thirty-five years of age, it was found that 15, or 4.5 per cent, had been apprenticed, and 23, or 6.9 per cent, had picked up some sort of skill. Thus 88.6 per cent had entered unskilled work. Each applicant had on an average held 3 different situations before reaching the age of twenty-one.

In an official return made of the occupations of boys leaving the elementary schools in London in 1899, it was found that 40 per cent went as errand-, van-, or boat-boys, 14 per cent as shop-boys, 8 per cent as office-boys and junior clerks, and only 18 per cent went into trades. A more recent return from certain schools showed 33.2 per cent going to skilled work, 61 per cent to unskilled work, and 5.8 per cent to higher education. To quote from the *Majority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws*:

The great prominence given to boy labor, not only in our evidence but in the reports of our special investigators, leads us to the opinion that this is perhaps the most serious of the phenomena which we have encountered in our study of unemployment. The difficulty of getting boys absorbed through gradual and systematic training in the skilled trades is great enough, but when to this are added the temptations outside the organized industries to enter at an early age occupations which are not themselves skilled and give no opportunity for acquiring skill, it seems clear that we are faced by a far greater problem than that of finding employment for adults who have fallen behind in the race for efficiency, namely that the growth of large cities has brought with it an enormous increase in occupations that are making directly for unemployment in the future.

The problem of the girls has received far less public attention. It is as important, for the educational value of acquiring a skilled

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws* (1909), Appendix, Vol. XX.

trade influences not only the worker herself, but her home and children. In London because this city is a center of the clothing industry, there is more opportunity for the girls to acquire trades than for the boys, and with the growth of the realization of their value and the development of agencies for assisting girls to enter trades, it is hoped that the number drifting to unskilled factory work will be considerably lessened.

It is difficult for a boy to acquire a trade in London. It is often said that apprenticeship is dead. This, I think, is far too general a statement. Undoubtedly since the introduction of the factory system there is less apprenticeship than formerly but it still exists in the handicraft trades and in printing, owing in the latter case largely to the action of the printers' trade unions, and it is still to be found to a certain extent among firms in engineering, cabinet-making, etc. There is no universal rule for any trade: each employer follows his own choice in the matter. In villages and country towns it is common, and it is a pity that no attempt has ever been made to ascertain the extent to which the system yet exists as a method of training. An inquiry made some years ago by the Technical Education Board of the London County Council into the building industry of London¹ showed that of 41 typical firms having 12,000 employees, there were only 80 apprentices and 143 learners, instead of 1,600, the right proportion. Nevertheless, the report showed a deep-rooted belief in apprenticeship as being the best means by which a boy can learn his trade; and I may add that at the present time the Institute of Master Builders is considering the question of apprenticeship and conferring with the London educational authorities on the matter. In the *Majority Report of the Poor Law Commission* I find it stated in summarizing the evidence of employers and workmen that "a strong feeling was expressed very generally that apprenticeship is the only way in which skilled workmen can get their training, and that the maintenance or revival of the system is necessary." Mr. Barnes, secretary to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, one of the largest trade unions, says: "Apprenticeship which had been on the decline till about 5 years ago, has been on the increase

¹ *Report of the Special Subcommittee on the Building Trades, 1899.*

since then," and he ascribes the change to "a more enlightened public opinion."

This increase of interest among employers in the training of their workers is a most hopeful sign, for no methods of dealing with the problems of juvenile employment can be successful unless the interest and co-operation of employers are obtained. But in England the average employer is a conservative man, and we could not wait for him to act, so public authorities have taken the matter up, and various efforts have been made to deal with the question. I will consider first the educational work in London where the Education Committee of the London County Council has been most active.

In London, attendance at an elementary school is compulsory until the fourteenth birthday, and no child may remain at a public elementary school after the completion of the school year in which he becomes fifteen. In 1910 out of 659,127 children in average attendance at elementary schools in London, 11,280 were over fourteen years of age.¹ No suggestion to give training for any particular trade below the age of fourteen has ever been considered seriously. In the elementary school boys are given simple wood and metal work sufficient to afford some training to hand and eye, and the girls receive a little teaching in domestic economy and sewing. Recently the London County Council has begun to establish so-called Central Schools (a development of the higher elementary schools) to which selected children are drafted between the ages of eleven and twelve and where they are urged to stay till the end of the school year in which they are fifteen. The instruction here is arranged on either an industrial or a commercial basis, but is not to be a definite preparation for a particular trade. It is hoped that there may be 60 such schools, but their organization will proceed slowly.

There are now in London 14 schools for boys over fourteen giving day courses in preparation for a definite trade; 6 are for engineering, 1 for the woodworking trades, and others for silver-smithing, tailoring, book production, etc. The fees vary from £1 10s. to £10 10s. per year. To quote from the official circular:

¹ *London County Council, Annual Report for 1910.*

These schools provide a one, two, and, in some cases three years' course of technical instruction. The course of training is not intended to supersede apprenticeship, but to supplement workshop training and to enable students to acquire a knowledge of the principles that underlie the processes which they will have to carry out in their daily work after leaving school. It is anticipated that boys who complete this course satisfactorily before entering workshops will be better fitted to enter a particular trade, and ultimately to attain higher positions than those who enter workshops immediately on leaving school.

Part of the day is given to practical work and part to theoretical and general instruction. In addition to these schools there are two at which a general preparatory trade training for boys from thirteen to sixteen years of age is given, and there are 9 schools intended for boys over sixteen where the course is of more advanced type and the fees are higher. These latter are largely attended by sons of employers and foremen, and hardly concern us here.

It is yet too early to judge of the position the boys' trade schools will occupy in the industrial world. When first started they were not sufficiently in touch with employers and their needs; this defect is now being remedied, and advisory committees of employers are being formed, but boys from the trade schools have generally to start at the same level as to work and wages as boys straight from an elementary school, for the trade schools purposely make no effort to train their pupils in workshop speed and technique. One must believe, however, that the prolonged education and the knowledge of theory will finally tell, and that the trained boys will rise to positions of responsibility in their trades.

The first Day Trade School for girls was opened in 1904. There are now courses in 6 institutions giving training in 11 trades varying from dressmaking to photography.

The instruction in these schools is intended to take the place of apprenticeship. It is given by trade teachers who have gained their experience in high-class trade workrooms. The schools are open on five days a week, and about two-thirds of that time is devoted to instruction in the trade chosen by the pupil; the other third is given to the continuation of the general education of the pupil, with special reference to the requirements of the particular trade. The school year begins in April, and the course is of two years' duration. The fee for admission to each of the Trade Schools for Girls is 10s. a term of three months or £1 10s. a session.

For every trade there is a consultative committee of employers who criticize the work done by the girls and see that it bears directly on the requirements of the trade. The girls readily obtain positions in the City and West End workrooms at a good wage on leaving, and already many of the first pupils have risen to good positions.

As with the boys, the larger number of pupils attend by maintenance scholarships. There were in 1910, 879 boys and girls attending these schools, so when one considers the number of children, about 62,000, who annually leave the elementary schools in London, and the expense which the maintenance of trade schools involves, it is obvious that it will be a long time before, if ever, the trade schools play a very large part in the industrial training of the young. Their importance lies in their work of fitting boys and girls to take the higher positions in their trades.

Thus these schools are only training the aristocracy of intelligence or wealth among the elementary-school children. A second section of this aristocracy is by the junior county scholarships transferred to the secondary schools at eleven years of age. These children either train through a system of scholarships to become teachers or they stay at school till fifteen or sixteen and then usually enter clerical work. There remains the question of the rank and file of the children, the most important question of all, for it is these who drift into unskilled work.

For ten years local committees of the Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment Association have been at work in London. Their object is the promotion of industrial training of boys and girls by apprenticeship and other methods. By careful selection of the children after consultation with the parents and school teachers, the Association seeks to provide employers in skilled trades with suitable young workers, and by supervising them during the period, from five to seven years or so, during which they are learning the trade, it endeavors to secure their steady application to their work. Where indentures for apprenticeship can be used, the committee arranges these, acting as a fourth party to the indentures with power to cancel them when necessary. Every effort is made to induce the boys to attend evening continuation or technical classes;

and throughout the Association has received the hearty support of the Education Committee of the London County Council. The work is of an individual nature, no pains being spared to secure the successful placing of a child. For this reason, and because the Association is entirely dependent upon voluntary subscriptions, the numbers placed are small. In 1911, 1,063 children were placed by 20 committees: 226 boys and 110 girls as indentured apprentices, and 377 boys and 350 girls as learners.

But the value of the work cannot be shown by figures. It is in every sense educational to parents, to children, and I venture to say, to employers too, and I am certain that during the ten years' work of the Association the desire among parents to start their children well in life has largely increased. Moreover, the Association has greatly helped in drawing public attention to the question, and, as often happens, pioneer voluntary work has been followed by legislative action in providing a channel for the passage from school to work.

In 1909 by the Labor Exchanges Act, the Board of Trade was given power to establish and to maintain labor exchanges throughout the United Kingdom, and to make general regulations for the management of the exchanges, and to establish and support advisory committees in connection with them. National Labor Exchanges have been opened throughout the country, until every district is now served by an exchange. From the outset these exchanges began registering boy and girl applicants in the same way as adults.

In February, 1910, special rules with regard to the registration of juvenile applicants in England and Wales were issued by the Board of Trade which provided:

a) For the establishment by the Board of special advisory committees for juvenile employment, consisting of persons possessing experience or knowledge of education or of other conditions affecting young persons, and also persons representing employers and workmen.

b) That the procedure of these special committees should be determined by the Board of Trade.

c) That the duty of the committees should be to give advice with regard to the management of any labor exchange in the district in relation to juvenile applicants for employment.

d) That, subject to these rules, a special advisory committee might take steps either by themselves or in co-operation with any other body or persons to give information, advice, and assistance to boys and girls and their parents with respect to the choice of employment and other matters bearing thereon, the Board of Trade however undertaking no responsibility with regard to any advice or assistance so given.

Steps have been taken gradually to establish juvenile advisory committees. By March, 1912, there were 25 at work in England and Wales, 2 in Scotland, and 6 in Ireland.

In November, 1910, by the Education (Choice of Employment) Act, power was given to local education committees to make arrangements for giving to boys and girls under seventeen years of age assistance with respect to the choice of suitable employment, by means of the collection and the communication of information and the furnishing of advice—a power which had already been conferred on Scotch school boards by the Education Act (Scotland), 1908. Hence, to avoid overlapping, a joint memorandum was issued by the Board of Education and the Board of Trade in March, 1911, with regard to co-operation between the labor exchanges and the education authorities exercising their powers under the act. The Board of Trade undertook not to continue the formation of new juvenile advisory committees until June, 1912, unless it was ascertained that the education authority desired not to act. Where both agencies existed, co-operation was strongly advised. By July, 1912, 28 employment bureaus had been established by education committees in England, and 30 in Scotland. In Birmingham and in Edinburgh a satisfactory scheme of co-operation between the Education Employment Bureau and the Labor Exchange has been arranged.

In London the Education Committee decided not to exercise its powers under the act. The Board of Trade has therefore formed the London Juvenile Advisory Committee on which the Education Committee is well represented. This central committee has gradually established 21 local juvenile advisory committees, i.e., one in connection with each labor exchange in the county of London. The functions of these committees are mainly: (1) to form rotas or subcommittees to attend at the labor exchanges for

the purpose of interviewing applicants and their parents, in order to give advice with regard to employment in general, and with regard to particular vacancies; (2) to endeavor to secure the attendance of boys and girls at continuation schools and technical classes; (3) in co-operation with care committees, boys' and girls' clubs, and similar institutions for the welfare of juveniles, to organize a system for keeping in touch with such boys and girls when placed, as may be thought to need continued supervision. These committees consist of about 30 members, one third of whom must be nominated by the London County Council Education Committee. Some are employers, some work people, some teachers, and the remainder members of apprenticeship and other committees.

As the exchanges were already dealing with boys and girls, this system has been grafted on to a running concern and only by degrees has a definite system been adopted for dealing with children leaving school. This system has been worked out in co-operation with the care committees formed under the London County Council Education Committee during the last four or five years. The object of the care committees is to deal with all social problems affecting school children, such as physical deterioration, underfeeding, and unsuitable employment. About 1,000 care committees have been formed, i.e., one in connection with each elementary school, and all members are voluntary workers; these committees are grouped into 27 local associations of care committees and are under the Central Care Committee, a subcommittee of the London County Council Education Committee. The procedure in connection with the after-care of the school children is as follows:

On the first day of each month the head teacher forwards to the secretary of the Children's Care Committee school-leaving forms in respect of all children who will reach the age of fourteen years during the next month but one. On the form the head teacher enters particulars as to the child's school career, special ability if any, health as taken from the school medical officer's last report, and mentions whether retention at school is recommended and if not, what sort of employment is advised.

The parents of the child are then seen either at school or by a visit of a member of the Children's Care Committee in order to discover whether (a) there is any need for outside advice, (b) any friendly oversight is likely to be necessary. The member of the Care Committee enters on the form a report as to the home circumstances, as to the parents' wishes as to employment, the name of any individual who will keep in touch with the child, and the recommendation of the Care Committee as to work. This form is sent to the local Labor Exchange. Should the Care Committee consider that the case is one better dealt with by a voluntary society,¹ this is marked on the form and the child is sent direct to the society, a duplicate of the form being sent to the exchange for filing purposes only. The local juvenile advisory committees arrange rotas or subcommittees of their members meeting on several days during the week, and the children whose forms have been sent in, are summoned with their parents to attend before these committees shortly before or immediately on leaving school. The rota committee recommends an occupation or a definite opening in the most suitable employment available, and the Secretary to the Juvenile Advisory Committee sends the child up to the firm, unless he can be persuaded to wait till a better vacancy is found. As soon as the child is placed, the local Juvenile Advisory Committee informs the Children's Care Committee asking it to find a suitable supervisor and sends a form to be filled in at the end of the month asking particulars as to the employment, evening class attended, and thrift, social, or other club joined. A similar form is sent out every May and November to the Care Committee to be filled in by the supervisor in order that the progress of the child may be known. In the event of his falling out of work, the supervisor is asked to report to the Local Juvenile Advisory Committee at once, and to advise him to re-register. The Juvenile Advisory Committee itself obtains reports from the employers where these are considered necessary. Where the child is found to have left the work found for him and has failed to re-register at the exchange, the supervisor is asked to report the

¹ Schemes of co-operation have been arranged between the labor exchanges and the Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment Association and similar voluntary societies.

reason to the Juvenile Advisory Committee, and to give particulars of the fresh employment.

It will be seen that by this scheme, the after-supervision is shared by the two bodies, the Juvenile Advisory Committee being responsible for the employment of the child, and the Care Committee for his progress from the home and social point of view.

As this scheme has only developed since 1910, it is yet far too early to determine its results. No figures exist to show the number of cases dealt with by the Juvenile Advisory Committees as distinct from the ordinary placing of the exchanges, nor are any particulars published to show the character of the situations found during the last year. The magnitude of the work is shown by the returns for 1911 which give 78,055 situations for boys and 44,495 for girls filled during the year in the United Kingdom. In the one week ending September 27, 1912, 584 boys' vacancies and 374 girls' vacancies were filled by the 34 exchanges covering Greater London.

The foundations of a scheme have been laid by which every boy and girl and the parents of every boy and girl have the opportunity of learning what the industries of the neighborhood are, and what are the prospects of employment there. Those with particular talents and capabilities can be guided to occupations where these have most play. The economic gain of this to the whole community is obvious.

The amount of information which will be collected about juvenile employment is a further great advantage. As the number of trained volunteer workers grows, the records which they supply of the progress of the boys and girls will constitute an invaluable stock of information. For this it is the desire of the Board of Trade to focus all the work of obtaining situations in the hands of the labor exchanges, but just here there appears to be a danger that in order to prevent a boy placing himself, he may be sent hurriedly to a less good situation than he might have obtained alone. There is also a fear that the large numbers which must necessarily be dealt with will leave too little time for the careful and individual attention which should attend the placing of every child. In those places where the work is undertaken by the education authority alone there is danger of a too great detachment from the

conditions of the adult labor market and of the work falling into the hands of education specialists who have not the requisite industrial knowledge.

It must be remembered that all employment bureaus can only deal with labor conditions as they exist, and the exploitation of boys and girls will continue in spite of all our efforts so long as poverty and want drive the children to earn money at the earliest moment and for the highest wage. Opinion in England is therefore growing, that to lessen the extent of juvenile employment in unsuitable occupations, legislative action is necessary. All who are interested in the question hope to see the school-leaving age raised to fifteen at least. There is an increasing desire also to see a system of compulsory continuation classes instituted. The school boards of Scotland have already power to form these, but have not taken action to any great extent. It is felt that when we have them in England they should be within the working day. A resolution approving them was passed in the House of Commons about three years ago, but this was merely an expression of opinion. If they are instituted, one hopes that the employment of juveniles at unskilled mechanical work will be less easy than it is at present, and that it will no longer be cheaper to employ a boy or a girl than to utilize and develop mechanical power.

In conclusion there is no one remedy for the problem. Every suggested method is needed, and will have to play its part, but in order that each may be in the position to do its utmost, we want the pressure of public opinion, we want all who are brought into touch with the children at school to realize that they share in the responsibility of this important step from school to work, and above all we want employers to feel that they are responsible for the future well-being of the young people whom they control, and that for present needs, they have no right to sap the foundations of future manhood and womanhood.

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